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ABSTRACT

Whittle Communication's Channel One is an educational broadcast service designed specifically for teenagers. This 12-minute daily broadcast claims to deliver top-quality news and information to schools, via satellite, with state-of-the-art production techniques. By creating a program that is completely original, Channel One hopes to consistently deliver riveting, age-appropriate coverage to an audience lacking in consistent news viewership. The purpose of this study was to describe student and teacher attentiveness to Channel One, and the perceived educational value and the quality of the presentation of Channel One within the Lakota School District of northwestern Ohio. A self-report questionnaire was used to survey all students (n=512) and teachers (n=33) at the junior and senior high schools. The results show that the mean viewing time of Channel One by students is 8.5 minutes, and that 74.8% of the students supported Channel One's claim that the service provides new ideas to think about. However, 78.9% of the students do not seek out more information about a topic shown on Channel One. In terms of the presentation of Channel One, 72.6% of the students rated the overall quality of the programming to be good or excellent. The average viewing time for teachers was 10 minutes, with 87.9% indicating that Channel One provides new ideas to think about. Ninety-seven percent of the teachers stated that the overall quality of Channel One was good or excellent. Overall, the analysis of the data seems to support the effectiveness of Channel One increasing students' awareness of news and current events. Data for the study are displayed in five tables. (11 references) (Author/BBM)

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The Perception of the Educational Value of Channel One Among Secondary Level Teachers and Students.

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Whittle Communication's Channel One is an educational broadcast service designed specifically for teenagers. This twelve minute daily broadcast claims to deliver top-quality news and information to schools, via satellite, with state-of-the-art production techniques. By creating a program that is completely original, Channel One hopes to consistently deliver riveting, age-appropriate coverage to an audience lacking in consistent news viewership. The purpose of this study was to describe student and teacher attentiveness to Channel One, and the perceived educational value and the quality of the presentation of Channel One within the Lakota School District of northwestern Ohio. A self-report questionnaire was used to survey all students (n=512) and teachers (n=33) at the junior and senior high schools. The results show that the mean viewing time of Channel One by students is 8.5 minutes, and that 74.8 % of the students supported Channel One's claim that the service provides new ideas to think about. However, 78.9% of the students do not seek out more information about a topic shown on Channel One. In terms of the presentation of Channel One, 72.6% of the students rated the overall quality of the programming to be good or excellent. The average viewing time for teachers was 10 minutes, with 87.9% indicating that Channel One provides new ideas to think about. Ninety-seven percent of the teachers stated that the overall quality of Channel One was good or excellent. Overall, the analysis of the data seems to support the effectiveness of Channel One in increasing students' awareness of news and current events.

Introduction

Studies and commentaries ("A Nation Still at Risk," 1989: Harris, 1989), suggested that American education is in serious trouble and that graduates of American high schools are not competitive with their counterparts in many foreign countries. Educators, politicians, and social critics have offered reasons for the problems with education, but most all agreed that American students are deficient in areas such as science, mathematics, geography, history, and cultural literacy. Particularly troublesome to many was the fact that a number of students had little, if any, awareness of basic current events and issues. The education plight is reflected in some of the following educational indicators:

*Six percent of seventeen-year-old high school students can solve multi-step math problems and use basic algebra.
*Seven percent are able to infer relationships and draw conclusions from detailed scientific knowledge.
*Given a blank map of Europe and asked to identify particular countries, young American adults typically give the correct answer less than one time in four (Finn, 1989).
*Twenty-seven million adults in the United States are functionally illiterate.
*Forty-six million adults are considered "marginal" literates.
*The drop-out rate ranges between 40 and 60 percent in areas like Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, and New York.
*Each day, nearly 3800 teenagers, nationwide drop out of school, according to the Department of Education (Townley, 1989).

From the educational indicators presented, it is clear that the panel which produced the "Nation at Risk" report in 1983 had good reason to be alarmed. The panel indicated that the United States had to act promptly or an educational meltdown would occur, the

educational system would crack, our culture erode, our economy totter, our national defenses weaken (Finn, 1989).

In 1989. a grim portrait of the public school system emerged from the Second Gallup *Phi Delta Kappa* Poll, which surveyed the attitudes of U.S. teachers toward the public schools. Teachers tend to regard themselves as martyrs. They believe that they are unappreciated and underrewarded, and they blame everyone but themselves for recognized school problems (Elam, 1989). The most frequently mentioned reason for the public school system's dyer situation, as cited by 34% of all teachers (830 respondents-57.2% elementary teachers, 32.7% secondary teachers, 4.2% both, 5% other) in the 1989 Gallup Poll, is parents' lack of interest and support. Others charged that parents do not help students realize the importance of preparing for the future. Some pointed to parental apathy, while others said that parents lack faith in the school system. Lack of proper financial support was the second most frequently mentioned reason; teachers acknowledge that the lack of financial support is related to other school problems. Other reasons mentioned as factors leading to the public education system's possible meltdown were: pupils' lack of interest/truancy (26%), poor curriculum/poor standards (6%), communication problems (3%), large schools/overcrowding (4%), teachers' lack of interest (3%), difficulty in getting good teachers (2%), and low teacher salaries (7%).

A semi-literate population, lacking both good learning habits and basic skills and knowledge, cannot support a productive economy. Scholars and studies often speak of potential solutions which can be used as guides to improve the educational system. Chester Finn (1987) offered direction for the improvement of the educational system. Some of his recommendations indicate that we must:

*Focus public regulation of education on ends, not means--professional educators need the latitude to organize schools and determine what happens within them.
*Let the schools manage themselves--each school should make its own key educational management decisions.
*Promote more imaginative school leadership.
*Engage parents as well as schools.
*Make better use of technology--technology allows the teacher to transform the classroom into a place where teachers teach, children learn.

Finn's final recommendation--make better use of technology--did not fall on deaf ears. The classroom has been profoundly affected by technological innovation, from computers to televisions. The use of these new innovations create new environments and new forms of knowledge. The classroom is vulnerable to technological innovation (Kaha, 1990), and as Finn (1987) has indicated the teacher should make better use of the technology. As Kaha (1990) states: "The classroom cannot exclude the impact of television." As Marshall Mcluhan pointed out, one can be absorbed by the glowing screen of television in a way that is not possible with books.

Between 1958 and 1960, Schramm et al., conducted the landmark study of the effects of television on North American children, as reported in Television in the Lives of Our Children (1961). The primary focus of this study was on the uses and functions of television for various categories of children. The study found that public affairs and news programs were not viewed consistenetly until the teenage years. Viewing of these types of programs depended on the teenager's age, sex, and mental development. Their results concluded that the "brighter" teens were the first to turn away from traditional entertainment programs in favor of news and public affairs content. These results did not mention the use of television in the classroom, but it did recommend tailoring television programming to the desired audience to achieve maximum cognition and development.

In the 1970's, teachers were still learning how to use the instructional television to teach teens, and in turn they were still learning how to integrate video into their curricula (Landay, 1989). During this period Walter Cronkite was inspired by the vision of a unique

offering to the nation's young, specifically through his PBS series. Cronkite dreamed of linking the power of television to the American public education system. He wanted to install satellite antennas on the roof tops of the nation's high schools to deliver to as many students as possible the nation's best teachers (Landay, 1989). From Cronkite's idea, Satellite Educational Services, Inc. was created in the 1970s and began producing *Why In The World* in the 1980s. Cronkite was not the only person who had great visions of television's power: The use of television in the classroom had emerged, and the battle between the big communication companies had begun. Ted Turner, the cable-ready King with CNN Newsroom, and Christopher Whittle, an innovative leader of the print industry with CHANNEL ONE, are competing for supremacy.

While Turner, arguably, needs no introduction, Whittle may. CHANNEL ONE is distributed by Whittle Communications L.P. of Knoxville, Tennessee. Christopher Whittle heads a media empire which is valued at more than $400 million. In March of 1990, Whittle began offering a daily twelve-minute program of current events and news. CHANNEL ONE has five educational goals:

*To enhance cultural literacy.
*To promote critical thinking.
*To provide a common language and shared experience.
*To provide relevance and motivation.
*To strengthen character and build a sense of responsibility.

CHANNEL ONE claims to offers "a unique combination of elements," such as:

* Instructional value-CHANNEL ONE's format incorporates a variety of factual information that is related with a teenage slant to current events.
*Video medium-featuring the use of graphics and imaging techniques familiar to today's teens.
*The immediacy aspect that is generated by a broadcast news format. The news is presented in a language geared to teens.[1]

These elements, along with others, are offered to junior high and high schools. The schools receive $50,000 worth of hardware (a satellite dish, a VCR-based recording and playback station, and televisions) in exchange for the guarantee that the newscast will be aired on a daily basis and viewed by the school. Of the twelve minutes beamed to students in classrooms, two minutes are commercials. As of March 1991, which marked CHANNEL ONEs' first anniversary, 8270 (Sylvester, 1991) schools were signed up for the standard three-year contract. After the three year period, the school can renew its contract or decide to terminate their relationship with Channel One, at which time the equipment will be returned.

Whittle Communications realizes that children generally do not watch news. They are using technology in an effort to link news to the educational system, and thereby improve the educational system. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe teachers' and students' attentiveness to Channel One, the perceived educational value, and the quality of presentation of CHANNEL ONE.

Methods

The school district from which the subjects were obtained is the largest school district, in land area, in the state of Ohio. Channel One has been broadcasting in the senior high school since September, 1990, and in the junior high school since January, 1991.

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[1]Note: Channel One Information obtained from the Channel One Media Kit, prepared by Whittle Communication, Inc.. Knoxville, Tennesse.

The district is located in three rural Northwestern Ohio counties, where the land is used primarily for farming. This area is characterized by many small towns and villages that support mainly blue collar industries and agriculture. The per capita income, in 1988, was $22, 638 (state average was $29,195). The 1990 Vital Statistics on Ohio School Districts indicated that 96.9% of the residents of this school district were Caucasian.

The school district contains one senior high school (grades 9-12) and one junior high school (grades 7 & 8), from which the 512 subjects were drawn. The 1990 average attendance rate of the students in the district was 93.3% (state average was 93.4%), with an average graduation rate of 74.6% (state average was 77.8%). Approximately 49% of the students who graduated in 1990 enrolled in some form of higher education. The results from this study showed that 89% of the students surveyed are planning to attend some form of higher education after they graduate. Table 1 indicates the number of students who responded to the questionnaire by gender, within each grade.

Insert Table 1 about here

There were 512 responses from 600 questionnaires distributed (85.3%) to students in grades 8 through 12. Nearly equivalent numbers of responses were received from both males (254) and females (258). There were 33 responses from 33 questionnaires distributed to teachers in both schools, with 15 responses from male teachers. All subjects were given the option of not participating in the study.

Two self-administered questionnaires developed by the researchers, one for students and one for teachers, were used to collect the data. This method (questionnaire) was selected because of the relatively large sample of students and teachers, and the data collection process' relative lack of interference with normal school activities. The questionnaires were administered by the homeroom teacher during the homeroom period, before the students were to watch Channel One. After ten minutes, the questionnaires were collected by the teachers and returned to the school office for retrieval by the researchers.

Each of the two questionnaires was one page in length, and was divided into four sections: degree of attentiveness to Channel One, educational value of Channel One, quality of the presentation of Channel One, and demographic data. For the first two sections, the subjects were asked to record their average daily viewing time of Channel One and respond to several yes/no questions about their level of attentiveness to various parts of the program and its educational value to them. These questions were derived from Channel One's statements of their intended educational goals for the program.[1] In the third section, the quality of the presentation of Channel One, the subjects were asked to assign letter grades (A through F) to various characteristics of Channel One (graphics, music, the hosts, commercials, etc.). These characteristics are standard media aesthetic qualities derived from Herbert Zettl's research in the areas of media asethetics and television production. They were selected to obtain the subjects' perception of various aesthetic qualities of Channel One, as well as their perceptions of the information content and its delivery (see Zettl, 1990, for a complete description of these characteristics).

Findings

The average viewing time of Channel One by the students in this study was 8.5 minutes, of the 12 minutes available (71.8%). The average viewing time of Channel One by teachers was 10 minutes (83.3%). These findings indicate a relatively high degree of

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[1]Note: Channel One Information obtained from the Channel One Media Kit, prepared by Whittle Communication, Inc.. Knoxville, Tennesse.

viewing by both groups of subjects. The high degree of attentiveness may be attributed to the recent implementation of Channel One in the senior high school (September 1990) and the junior high school (January 1991). Thus, it is possible that the newness of the service may be creating the high interest level. Given that at the present time, there is no other available evidence with which to compare these result a longitudinal study of Channel One viewing attentiveness would provide a necessary benchmark for future comparisons.

The responses related to the attentiveness to the various components of the broadcast as well as the perceived educational value of Channel One are shown in Table 2. The responses were obtained via yes or no answers and are reported interms of the percent of "yes" responses.

Insert Table 2 About Here

The responses obtained in Table 2 should be considered together because the subjects' degree of attentiveness contributes to the perceived educational value of Channel One. A high degree of attentiveness (over 65%) was reported, with the exception of the viewing of the commercials (51.2%). This may be attributed to the repetition and lack of originality in the commercials. Further study of the commercials within Channel One may provide more concrete information. Under the variable of perceived educational value, the information on Channel One is not generally used in classroom discussion by the students (38.1%), nor in their out-of-school activities (33.7%). The students very rarely seek out additional information about topics discussed on Channel One (20.4%), and they rarely ask questions about this information (30.8%). On the other hand, Channel One does provide new ideas to think about (72.7%), and it does make students more aware of other cultures (77.3%). Sixty percent indicated that Channel One does provide positive role models. Therefore, for this group of students, the data supports Channel One's original programming goals of enhancing cultural literacy and promoting critical thinking. Students in all grade levels are receiving new information from Channel One, especially dealing with other cultures. This cultural information is most often shown during the Feature segment, which is also the highest viewed segment of the program. However, it does not support the goal of providing relevance and motivation, as students do not pursue additional information outside of the Channel One environment. This could reflect a continuation of their personal viewing habits of television at home.

With respect to the quality of the presentation of Channel One, the responses are tabulated in Table 3. This table summarizes both the junior and senior high school students' evaluation of the program's visual, aural, and message content.

Insert Table 3 About Here

Table 3 summarizes the students' perceptions of the quality of the presentation of Channel One. Approximately 72% of the students rated the overall quality of Channel One's presentation to be good or excellent. Channel One was also given high marks in its ability to communicate information to the viewer (77% good or excellent). In the areas of visual style (graphics, maps and charts, colors, on-screen lettering), Channel One received high marks again (no less than 75% good or excellent). The use of student and celebrity reporters also fared well with the students (67% good or excellent). However, the pacing, music and visual excitement of the program was not well received by the students (no more than 56% good or excellent). Therefore, Channel One appears to provide common knowledge and shared experiences through familiar production techniques and personalities. Many students commented that the style of Channel One is similar to that of

programs on MTV and Nickelodeon, which use large on-screen lettering, visually exciting graphics, and identifiable and likable personalities. Some of the lack of visual excitement may be attributed to the news content of the program.

In Table 4, the teachers' degree of attentiveness and perceived educational value of Channel One are tabulated. Table 5 summarizes the teachers' evaluation of the program's visual, aural, and message content.

Insert Table 4 About Here

Insert Table 5 About Here

The responses in Tables 4 and 5 summarize the teachers' degree of attentiveness and the preceived educational value and quality of the presentation of Channel One. All of the Channel One program segments were highly viewed by the teachers (no less than 87% attentiveness), except for the commercials (42%). This may indicate that the teachers find the commercials to be of little value to them. This is not really surprising, since the commercials are targeted toward the younger student audience. As for perceived educational value, the teachers also highly rated Channel One's performance in cultural awareness (100%), providing positive role models for students (97%), and providing students new ideas to think about (88%). The teachers, like the students, reported that Channel One was not generally being used in classroom discussion (58%) or to motivate them to seek out additional information on Channel One topics (42%).

Overall, 97% of the teachers gave Channel One's presentation a grade of good or excellent. The highest rated elements were again the visual style elements of graphics, lettering, etc. (no less than 94% good or excellent). Again, the commercials were not very well rated, with only 54% giving them a grade of good or excellent.

Summary

Channel One appears to be accomplishing most of its intended programming goals with its unique format. Students and teachers responded positively to Channel One's ability to provide new ideas in the learning environment, to enhance cultural literacy, and to provide positive role models. Channel One also has been able to effectively reach the teenager with programming that they like and are familiar with. It has been able to get students interested and involved in ideas and issues in which they may have not been previously exposed. However, Channel One falls short in its ability to promote motivation outside the Channel One environment . This may be caused by the lack of follow-up on issues and concepts by teachers in the classroom. Instructional material is provided with the program, but it appears that it is not being utilized in the classroom. As Channel One becomes an established part of the school day in the future, it may become more useful to teachers and students.

Future research on Channel One may be able to address these concerns. The timing of this study, shortly after the implementation of Channel One in these schools, may have obtained more positive results than expected because of Channel One's newness in the learning environment. Future studies, especially longitudinal in design, would enable researchers to examine this concern. Future studies might also examine a number of different school settings where Channel One is present to possibly construct valid generalizations about the use of Channel One as an educational tool. Another area for future research is the effectiveness of the commercials within the program. Although this study found that the commercials were not generally viewed, their impact on this young audience could be analyzed in greater detail.

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TABLE 1
DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS

CHARACTERISTICS	SUBJECTS						
	STUDENTS (n=512)						TEACHERS
	7TH	8TH	9TH	10TH	11TH	12TH	(n=33)
TOTAL	102	77	102	82	74	75	33
MALES	53	33	49	43	35	41	16
FEMALES	49	44	53	39	39	34	17

TABLE 2
THE STUDENTS' DEGREE OF ATTENTIVENESS AND THE PERCEIVED EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF CHANNEL ONE (PERCENTAGE OF YES RESPONSES, n=512)

TOPIC	QUESTION	JR. HIGH n=179	SR. HIGH n=333	TOTAL n=512
ATTENTIVENESS	Do you typically watch the Lead story?	77.6	78.9	78.4
	Do you typically watch the Focus segment?	62.3	66.5	65.0
	Do you typically watch the Feature segment?	79.8	78.6	79.0
	Do you typically watch the Pop Quiz?	80.9	72.1	75.2
	Do you typically watch the End piece?	61.2	67.6	65.4
	Do you typically watch the commercials?	61.7	45.4	51.2
PERCEIVED EDUCATIONAL VALUE	Is the information on Channel One **generally** used in classroom discussion?	42.1	35.9	38.1
	Is the information on Channel One **generally** useful in your out of school activities?	41.5	29.3	33.7
	Does Channel One provide **new** ideas to think about?	75.4	71.2	72.7
	Do you **ever** ask questions about the information shown?	41.5	24.9	30.8
	Do you **ever** seek out more information about a topic shown?	28.4	16.0	20.4
	At time, does Channel One relate to what you are currently studying in class?	68.3	76.8	73.9
	Does the information on Channel One make you **more aware** of other cultures?	78.1	76.8	77.3
	Does Channel One provide you with **positive** role models?	63.9	58.4	60.4

TABLE 3
THE QUALITY OF THE PRESENTATION OF CHANNEL ONE
(PERCENTAGE OF GRADE GIVEN TO EACH ITEM)
TOTAL n = 512, SR. HIGH = 333, JR. HIGH = 179

ITEM	LEVEL	PERCENTAGE OF GRADE				
		A	B	C	D	F
The ability of Channel One to effectively communicate the information to the viewer	Jr. High	23.4	47.4	25.1	2.3	1.7
	Sr. High	33.4	47.6	15.4	2.7	0.9
	Total	29.8	47.5	18.7	2.5	1.2
The style of graphics used	Jr. High	43.0	34.6	18.9	1.7	1.7
	Sr. High	38.4	40.2	18.1	1.2	2.1
	Total	39.6	38.1	18.7	1.3	2.1
Colors used during Channel One	Jr. High	52.5	27.1	15.8	2.2	2.2
	Sr. High	42.5	36.8	16.1	2.4	2.1
	Total	45.6	33.1	15.8	2.3	2.1
Maps and charts used	Jr. High	44.9	34.1	15.3	3.9	1.7
	Sr. High	51.1	30.5	13.3	4.2	0.9
	Total	48.1	31.7	14.0	4.0	1.2
On-screen lettering used	Jr. High	42.8	30.8	16.6	4.0	5.7
	Sr. High	52.7	25.8	13.2	4.3	3.9
	Total	48.1	27.1	14.2	4.0	4.4
Type of music used	Jr. High	22.9	26.8	33.5	7.8	8.9
	Sr. High	19.6	29.1	27.5	10.4	13.4
	Total	20.4	27.9	29.4	9.4	11.7
Loudness of music used	Jr. High	27.4	33.7	28.6	6.3	4.0
	Sr. High	20.6	35.5	30.6	5.8	7.6
	Total	22.5	34.2	29.4	6.2	6.3
The pacing of Channel One	Jr. High	20.8	31.4	35.9	6.2	5.6
	Sr. High	18.2	32.2	38.6	6.9	3.9
	Total	18.8	31.5	37.5	6.7	4.4
Visual excitement	Jr. High	23.2	37.3	25.4	6.2	7.9
	Sr. High	19.3	30.7	31.3	10.8	7.8
	Total	20.4	32.9	29.0	9.4	7.7
The commercials	Jr. High	30.3	25.7	28.0	7.4	8.6
	Sr. High	23.4	25.6	25.9	11.7	13.3
	Total	25.2	25.6	26.8	10.0	11.2
The hosts of Channel One	Jr. High	25.4	42.4	22.0	3.4	6.8
	Sr. High	25.8	38.7	22.5	5.1	7.8
	Total	25.6	40.0	22.3	4.4	7.3
The adult reporters	Jr. High	20.8	47.9	21.4	4.0	5.8
	Sr. High	23.2	41.2	27.1	4.9	3.6
	Total	21.7	42.7	24.6	4.6	4.2
The student reporters	Jr. High	31.0	42.5	19.5	1.7	5.2
	Sr. High	29.6	35.7	23.2	7.6	3.9
	Total	29.8	37.3	21.5	5.4	4.2
The celebrity reporters	Jr. High	31.2	40.5	20.6	2.9	4.6
	Sr. High	27.5	38.5	21.4	7.6	4.8
	Total	28.1	38.8	20.8	6.0	4.7
The overall quality of the presentation	Jr. High	29.9	44.1	19.2	2.3	4.5
	Sr. High	26.2	45.2	21.1	3.9	3.6
	Total	27.5	44.6	20.2	3.3	3.8

TABLE 4
THE TEACHERS' DEGREE OF ATTENTIVENESS AND THE PERCEIVED EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF CHANNEL ONE (PERCENTAGE OF YES RESPONSES, n = 33)

TOPIC	QUESTION	PERCENT
ATTENTIVENESS	Do you typically watch the Lead Story segment?	100.0
	Do you typically watch the Focus segment?	87.9
	Do you typically watch the Feature segment?	100.0
	Do you typically watch the Pop Quiz segment?	93.9
	Do you typically watch the End Piece segment?	87.9
	Do you typically watch the commercials?	42.4
PERCEIVED EDUCATIONAL VALUE	Is the information on Channel One generally used in classroom discussion?	57.6
	Is the information on Channel One generally useful in your out of school activities?	63.6
	Does Channel One provide new ideas to think about?	87.9
	Do you ever ask questions about the information shown on Channel One?	78.8
	Do you ever seek out more information about a topic shown on Channel One?	42.4
	At times, does Channel One relate to what you are currently studying in class?	78.8
	Does the information on Channel One make the students more aware of other cultures?	100.0
	Does Channel One provide the students with positive role models?	97.0

TABLE 5
QUALITY OF THE PRESENTATION OF CHANNEL ONE
(PERCENTAGE OF GRADE GIVEN TO EACH ITEM)
n = 33

ITEM	PERCENTAGE OF GRADE				
	A	B	C	D	F
The ability of Channel One to effectively communicate the information to viewers	60.6	36.4	3.0		
The style of graphics used	57.6	42.4			
Colors used during Channel One	66.7	27.3	6.1		
Maps and charts	69.7	27.3			
On-screen lettering	69.7	27.3	3.0		
Type of music used	51.5	30.3	12.1		
Loudness of music used	36.4	45.5	18.2		
Pacing of Channel One	33.3	51.5	15.2		
Visual excitement	45.5	45.5	3.0	3.0	3.0
The commercials	9.1	45.5	33.3	9.1	3.0
The hosts of Channel One	42.4	39.4	15.2	3.0	
The adult reporters	42.4	45.5	12.1		
The student reporters	42.4	45.5	12.1		
The celebrity reporters	42.4	48.5	9.1		
The overall quality of the presentation	63.6	33.3	3.0		